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Homeless and Highly Mobile Students:
What is the Situation 25 Years after McKinney-Vento Legislation?

Submitted by Megan Betters

May, 2012

MSW Clinical Research Paper

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present their findings. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

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Abstract

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which was passed in the late 1980's, set provisions to help remove the barriers to receiving an education for the more than 1.35 million children living in homelessness today. In the 25 years that have passed since the enactment of this legislation McKinney-Vento continues to define the educational rights afforded to homeless and highly mobile students. The purpose of this research paper was to determine if this legislation continues to meet the needs of homeless and highly mobile students. In this qualitative study, four district liaisons to homeless and highly mobile students were interviewed. The school districts that these liaisons served represented rural, suburban and urban districts within Minnesota. After analyzing the data, six main themes and multiple subthemes emerged. The six main themes were: district liaison role, collaboration, economic climate, funding, unmet student needs, and needed changes to McKinney-Vento Legislation. While McKinney-Vento Legislation provides an important framework for the educational rights of homeless and highly mobile students, more work needs to be done to provide the same educational experience as housed students. While this could include many recommendations, the most important is providing equitable funding for all school districts with homeless and highly mobile students.

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Homeless and Highly Mobile Students: What is the Situation 25 Years after McKinney-Vento Legislation?

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is legislation that was enacted as the first federal response to homelessness in 1987 (Foscarinis, 1995). This legislation was originally called Urgent Relief for the Homeless Act, but was renamed following the deaths of Representative Stewart B. McKinney (Republican) and Bruce Vento (Democrat), who were the chief sponsors of this legislation (Foscarinis, 1995; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006). Initially, under this federal legislation, many emergency programs were created such as shelter programs, transitional housing programs, permanent housing programs, as well as physical and mental health care coverage for the homeless (Foscarinis, 1991). In addition to this, the McKinney-Vento legislation also enacted programs for the education of homeless children and adults, and expanded food assistance to those experiencing homelessness and those close to being homeless (Foscarinis, 1995). Importantly, it also established a federal definition of homelessness (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006).

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act has great significance because it was the first federal legislation to address the serious issue of homelessness in the United States. The wide span of individuals that were suffering from homelessness identified in the legislation included homeless children, homeless veterans, and other homeless individuals who were experiencing mental health issues (Foscarinis, 1991). The passage of the legislation was monumental in the eyes of advocates for the homeless who had been working to have homeless individuals' voices and needs heard and met for many years

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(Foscarinis, 1991). This legislation acknowledged the need for support for the many individuals who were experiencing homelessness.

Enactment of McKinney-Vento legislation had significant implications for children experiencing homelessness. This legislation ensured access to public education for children who were experiencing homelessness, although it left the details of what that means up to individual states to determine (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006). A child is eligible for services if he or she is considered to be homeless or highly mobile, which is federally defined as,

(A) individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...(B) includes: (i) children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason...are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement; (ii) children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...; (iii) children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings, and (iv) migratory children...who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii) (Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006).

Homelessness relating to children, and access to services in school is an important topic for social workers to be familiar with, especially those working with the affected population, including families and children. Being aware of the legislation and rights of homeless and highly mobile children, as well as barriers that they face in receiving their

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education, will help to improve social worker knowledge of the affected population, and will improve service delivery to these families and children. Because of the large impact that this McKinney-Vento legislation has on homeless children, this qualitative study will present a literature review, methods, findings and discussion related to the examination of the legislation and its effectiveness of the legislation and to what extent it meets the needs of homeless and highly mobile students.

Literature Review

Homelessness

When an individual thinks of a homeless person, many times the picture that is conjured in one's mind is that of an older white man who has lived in urban streets and parks for numerous years (Nord & Luloff, 1995; Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006; Vissing&Diament, 1997; Beggar, 2001). But as time has progressed, the face of homelessness has expanded to include that of families (Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006; Nord & Luloff, 1995). In one study of 44,430 women living in an urban environment, it was found that 11.4 percent of the women surveyed had experienced at least one episode of homelessness in a seven-year span surrounding the birth of her first child (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). This statistic helps to illustrate the changing face of homelessness.

Homelessness can be experienced by families for many different reasons including unemployment, decreased real income, decreased availability of affordable housing, physical, mental or emotional disabilities, and violence (Nord & Luloff, 1995). There is also a racial divide in who experiences homelessness (Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006). It has been found that African American women who had less education were more likely

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than any other group to experience homelessness (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). It has also been reported that of families experiencing homelessness, 40% are African American (Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006).

Children Experiencing Homelessness

It has been estimated that 1.35 million children experience homelessness in the United States every year (Miller, 2009). This problem has not been exclusive to the urban areas of the United States, but also to mid-sized and rural communities throughout the nation (Miller, 2009; Nord & Luloff, 1995). Additionally, it has been found that the rate of homelessness is growing in children under the age of five (Reed-Victor & Stronge, 2002).

The mothers of homeless children often face difficulties while pregnant, and often these issues continue into early childhood, which again, sets them up for difficulties later in life (Biggar, 2001). In addition to this, while in utero children whose mothers are experiencing increased stress during pregnancy, labor, delivery, and early life could be exposed to central nervous system damage resulting in poor development (Miller, 2009). Also, many homeless children will experience poor nutrition, which is a major contributor to poor health (Miller, 2009). However it is important to note that it has also been found that children who have experienced homelessness have an increased ability to adapt to changing situations and increased resilience compared to other children (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006).

Behavioral and emotional problems in children experiencing homelessness. It has been found that children experiencing homelessness are more likely to also experience behavioral and emotional problems (Miller, 2009; Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006; Nord & Luloff, 1995). For example, children

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who are experiencing homelessness have higher rates of aggression and non-compliance compared to other children (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006; Nord & Luloff, 1995).

Emotionally, children experiencing homelessness have higher rates of shyness, dependent behavior, withdrawal, anxiety, and depression compared to other children (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; Nord & Luloff, 1995). In addition to this, it has been found that children experiencing homelessness have lower self-esteem than their peers, lack peer acceptance, and often carry much shame related to their homeless situation (Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006). Homeless children also experience much stress because of a lack of stability. With all of these issues combined it is not surprising that homeless children have a higher rate of mental health issues. Unfortunately, less than one third of the homeless children with mental health issues receive help to treat those issues (Hart-Shegos, 1999).

Academic problems in children experiencing homelessness. In addition to behavioral and emotional problems that homeless children experience, studies have found that homeless children perform at a significantly lower level than their peers academically (Vissing & Diamant, 1997; Nord & Luloff, 1995; Biggar, 2001). In a study done in New York City with students from third to tenth grade, homeless students scored significantly lower in reading and math than their peers (Biggar, 2001). Homeless students have also been found to have lower test scores, lower grades, and increased educational disabilities (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; Miller, 2009). However, even though homeless children perform at a lower rate than their housed peers, they do not have any more access to service to help them achieve at grade level (Hart-Shegos, 1999).

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It has also been found that students who are homeless are less likely to attend school regularly and have increased truancy rates than their peers (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; Miller, 2009). In addition to this, it is more likely for students who are homeless to repeat a grade than students who are not homeless (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; Miller, 2009). This can have life long implications as it has been found that students who repeat grades are more likely to drop out of school than those who have not repeated a grade (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; Miller, 2009).

While students experiencing homelessness have difficulties achieving academic success in school, they also encounter educational barriers prior to registering and enrolling into a school (Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006). Even though McKinney-Vento legislation is meant to ensure an appropriate public school education to youth experiencing homelessness, barriers to receiving an education do still exist for these students and families (Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006). Students enrolling in any level of school usually need to supply the school with information regarding residency, guardianship, medical records, and transportation needs. For students who are not homeless this information may be easy to provide, but these requirements become barriers to student who are experiencing homelessness because they may be unable to provide much of that information (Masten, Sesma, Si-Asar, Lawrence, Miliotis, & Dionne, 1997; Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006). For example a homeless family will not have a permanent address to prove that they live within the school district boundaries. Also copies of medical records are needed to register for schools because proof of mandatory vaccination is needed before students can start school.

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Not only do homeless children encounter barriers to registering and enrolling in schools, their experience outside of school can lead to the above-mentioned issues in school. First, children may experience a social stigma related to living in a shelter (Masten et al., 1997). There may also be negative factors associated with living in a shelter besides the stigma. These factors include the possibility of the shelter being noisy and crowded (Masten et al., 1997). If a child is living in a place that is noisy and crowded, many activities could be negatively affected including the ability to do homework, to concentrate on doing that homework, and the ability to sleep well and wake up rested. Additionally, homeless children may experience problems related to transportation. They may not have access to reliable transportation and lack money to spend on transportation, or have no reliable transportation at their disposal (Masten, 1997). As a result of having inconsistent capabilities attending school may have a negative effect on the homeless child's school attendance. Lastly, constant mobility between shelter and other places homeless children are staying at can have a great impact on them including being able to stay organized and ability to succeed academically (Masten, et al., 1997).

McKinney-Vento Legislation

Positive benefits of legislation. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, originally passed in 1987, established that homeless children are entitled to a free and appropriate education. Additionally it removed any residency requirements for children to enroll in school. It also created a position within each state for an individual to coordinate money and services for homeless and highly mobile students (Markward & Biros, 2001). In 1990 the Act was amended to establish that no barriers could be put in place to prevent homeless children from enrolling in school. Also, at this time, state education departments

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were allowed to begin to award grants for the removal of barriers of kids enrolling in school. This means that they were able to receive grant funding to develop before and after school programs, tutoring, and mental and physical health programs (Markward & Biros, 2001). Again in 1994 the Act was amended. At that time, the services were extended to cover homeless children in pre-school and homeless students who attend faith-affiliated schools (Markward & Biros, 2001). In 2001, McKinney-Vento was reauthorized through the No Child Left Behind Act (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). This reauthorization expanded the definition of homelessness, strived to decrease school mobility and provide services to homeless students without segregating them from students with permanent housing (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006).

There have been positive effects from the passage of McKinney-Vento legislation. One positive has been the identification of homelessness as a problem not only affecting adults, but also affecting children (Biggar, 2001; Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). In addition to this it also provided comprehensive emergency assistance to the homeless, and explicitly addressed the needs that were experienced by homeless children (Biggar, 2001; Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006).

Problems with the legislation. While there have been great benefits from the passage of this comprehensive legislation, problems have been cited when pertaining to children. One pervasive problem with the legislation is funding. There are authorized levels of funding that were established to fund the Act, but the allocations, or actual dollar amount has historically been well below what has been authorized (Nord and Luloff, 1995; Biggar, 2001; Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). Many think that there needs to be more funding dedicated toward children (Nord and Luloff, 1995; Biggar, 2001;

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Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). Also funding needs to be used in a timely manner (Biggar, 2001). This means that after the funding from the federal government has reached the states, the funding takes a long time to have an impact on homeless students. At the state and federal levels noncompliance related to funding states and local districts needs to be eliminated (Biggar, 2001).

Besides funding, states also frequently fail at implementing three parts of McKinney-Vento Legislation: residency requirements, transportation, and guardianship (Biggar, 2001). As was previously discussed, children must have a permanent address within a school district to attend those schools, but homeless children are turned away because they lack this basic requirement even though the legislation states that they must be admitted to the school (Biggar, 2001). When looking at transportation, homeless families in urban communities may be unable to access services to get transportation to and from school, while in rural communities public transportation may not be available (Biggar, 2001). Also, many school districts do not allow children to enroll if they live with an adult who is not their parent or legal guardian, but children in families that are homeless may be left in the care of another adult to avoid having to move from shelter to shelter with their parents (Biggar, 2001). In addition to this some also feel that the definition of homeless needs to be expanded to be more inclusive to cover children living without families, and those who are not living in structures described, such as an alley, abandoned building or vehicle (Biggar, 2001). Also, much research reports that there is difficulty in identifying homeless children, a lack of awareness of needs of homeless children, and limited awareness of legislation, specifically the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006).

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Many researchers have identified that the legislation is problematic because it does not address the bigger picture of homelessness and the causes of homelessness. These larger systemic issues include increasing low-income housing, increasing minimum wage to a living wage, and having adequate supports for poor families (Biggar, 2001). Critics would like the systemic issues to be addressed in legislation to move forward to be able to end homelessness on a national level.

Needed legislative changes. Both benefits and problems from McKinney-Vento legislation are identified in research as well as needed legislative changes. As McKinney-Vento is reauthorized, and as new legislation concerning homeless students is introduced, better tracking methods of homeless students need to be developed, and additional resources, including more funding, needs to be instated (Nord & Luloff, 1995). In addition to this communication and collaboration between government entities as well as professionals and other programs needs to be facilitated (Reed-Victor & Stronge, 2002; Miller, 2009).

Conceptual Framework

Ecological Theory

Ecology is the study of living beings and their environment, both social and physical, and the relationship that exists between the two (Forte, 2007). In other words it looks not just at the person, nor just the environment, but the person in his or her environment. As changes occur in both the person and the environment, there is an adaptation that takes place. An adaptation is defined as, "... a dynamic process between people and their environments as people grow, achieve competence, and make contributions to others" (Miley, 2011, p. 27). Also important in the ecological perspective is the idea of a niche. A

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niche can be thought of as how an individual fits in to his or her surrounding environment (Forte, 2007). It can also be thought of as an individual's ultimate relationship to a place where his or her tolerances and requirements are met (Forte, 2007).

Stress and coping are also important concepts. Stress can be defined as any force that causes a deviation from homeostasis for the individual; while coping can be defined as actions an individual takes to diminish the consequences of stress (Shaw & Sorensen, 1993).

Systems Theory

Systems theory is the looking at a whole, or in other words, a whole made up of interdependent interacting parts (Forte, 2007). The idea behind this theory can be thought of in a common phrase, a whole is more than the sum of its parts (Forte, 2007). Therefore, a whole cannot be explained by the actions of isolated parts (Forte, 2007). Feedback loops gather information from the environment and then use that information to set goal states and standards for the system as a whole (Forte, 2007). Inputs and outputs are used in the feedback loop. Input is the selected information that is absorbed by the system (Forte, 2007). Output is what the system transfers to the environment on the outside (Forte, 2007). A boundary is crossed in both the input and output phases, and can be physical (like skin) or symbolic (like sexism within a given industry) (Forte, 2007). How information is able to transfer is dependent on the boundary of the system (Forte, 2007). Flow is also dependent on how permeable a boundary of a system is (Forte, 2007). It is important to note that there can be open and closed systems. Open systems are receptive to the flow of information and energy, whereas closed systems consist of boundaries that are much less receptive to the flow of information and energy (Forte, 2007). Homeostasis is also an

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important concept that can be thought of an individual maintaining equilibrium (Miley, 2011). An individual will encounter situations that will challenge his or her equilibrium, which results in that individual trying to get back to their regular equilibrium (Miley, 2011). Feedback is used to confirm an individual's equilibrium, however continual feedback that challenges an individual's equilibrium results in a new equilibrium being established (Miley, 2011).

Ecosystems Theory

Based on these two theories, the ecosystems perspective has been developed, and will be used as the conceptual framework used in this study. The ecosystems perspective views human adjustment and execution within the context of an individual's social and physical environment (Miley, 2011). This integrated theory looks at individuals as systems interacting with in a context of a larger system and environment (Miley, 2011). This theory also posits that human behavior and interaction with others is something that develops over time and is the result of both internal and external factors (Miley, 2011). In addition to this, the ecosystems perspective defines current interaction as how an individual adapts to fit into his or her current environment, which is also called person-in-environment (Miley, 2011). This means that the behavior of a human being is adaptive and logical in the context of that person (Miley, 2011). Ecosystems theory operates under the assumption that individuals are complex beings and a comprehensive look at an individual is needed to explain behavior (Miley, 2011).

The ecosystem theory can also be thought of within a conceptual framework focused on five things: what is the focal system, what is inside the system, what is outside they system, how do the inside and outside connect, and how does the system move

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through time (Miley, 2011). First a focal system must be determined. This is a defined reference point that can change depending on the purpose of what needs to be done. For example, one could chose a focal point at the beginning of a therapeutic relationship as building a trusting relationship with the client (Miley, 2011). Secondly, one must determine what is happening inside of the system. This consists of looking into the structure, interaction, biopsychosocial, and cultural dimensions that are found inside the established focal system (Miley, 2011). Thirdly, one must determine what is happening outside of the system. This consists of determining the other systems that are in the focal systems environmental context (Miley, 2011). Then, one must determine how the inside of the system and the outside of the system connect. To do this, one can look at the connections between the focal system and the applicable surrounding systems (Miley, 2011). Lastly, one must determine how the system moves through time. To do this, one can keep track of adaptations that happen while the focal system is developing (Miley, 2011).

Ecosystems can be applied to the situation that homeless students face. When thinking of the research that this paper is exploring, the focal point would be a student experiencing homelessness. Inside of the focal system, structure may be in disarray, and while school could be providing structure, it may be likely that it is difficult for the student to get to school from wherever he or she was able to find shelter to stay the previous night. Attention to school work and peers could be preoccupied because of lack of sleep. In addition to this, biopsychosocial factors including emotional and behavioral issues, as well as difficulty with social interactions. When looking outside of the focal system, there are other systems that a student focal system could be interacting with including the school, shelters or other social services. The inside and outside systems could interact in a variety

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of ways. One of the most obvious ways is that the biopsychosocial factors including emotional, behavior, and social difficulties impacting service delivery and availability from schools and other resources. Lastly, adaptations could occur with the student that is homeless (focal system). For example the student's behavior could adapt in a way that would either increase available services to him or her, or an adaptation could occur where services could decrease availability. For example, a homeless student could look for help and support from agencies or school that could increase available services. Conversely, a student who is homeless could retreat from his or her support network and therefore not receive services because those that could help in the support system are unaware that he or she is homeless.

Research Question

As the research has indicated, homelessness is an issue facing not just older males, but also families in the United States. Many children who experience homelessness also encounter difficulty related to emotional and behavioral disturbances, as well as academic success. While McKinney-Vento legislation has set federal precedent on the issue of homelessness, problems do exist and need to be corrected. To develop a deeper and more evolved understanding of McKinney-Vento legislation and its affect on homeless youth this qualitative research study will further examine if the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is meeting the needs of homeless and highly mobile students.

Methods

Participants

To obtain data concerning McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act's ability to meet the needs of homeless and highly mobile students, four social workers that act as the

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district liaison to homeless and highly mobile students in rural, suburban, and urban school districts were interviewed. A purposive sampling was used to find subjects for this study. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability, "...technique wherein investigators use their judgment and prior knowledge to choose people for the sample who best serve the purposes of the study" (Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2011, p. 506).

The student population of these districts ranged from 5,500 students to 38,000 students, kindergarten to twelfth grade. The homeless and highly mobile student populations of these districts ranged from 350 homeless and highly mobile students to just over 1,900 homeless and highly mobile students. While this sample does cover an array of different districts, more participants would have made a more complete sample.

In this study these individuals were selected because of their knowledge of working with homeless and highly mobile students and knowledge of McKinney-Vento legislation. In addition to this, these individuals have worked to develop the current policies for working with homeless and highly mobile students and families. Therefore, these individuals may have had a first hand look at the evolution of McKinney-Vento legislation since its inception. Individuals were found by researching which school districts receive McKinney-Vento funding. This research occurred from information found on the internet, from individual State resources, and school district resources. Following the identification of individuals who met the set criteria, the researcher made contact with the person by email and invited them to participate in this research (see Appendix C).

Before beginning the interview, the participants were emailed the consent form, previously approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of St. Thomas| St. Catherine University, to guarantee the confidentiality of the participant in this

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research (see Appendix A). The consent form presents the measures taken to ensure the participants are protected by confidentiality, by remaining anonymous. Additionally, it described that the voice information collected from the interview will be destroyed by June 1, 2012. It also reminded the participant that his or her participation in this study was voluntary and if at any time he or she wished to stop, he or she could do so without penalty. If the participant had questions following the interview, contact information for both the interviewer and supervising professor was provided. There was no direct benefit or risk to participants who choose to take part in this research.

Data Collection

After securing participants for the interviews, the interviews were conducted in a comfortable, convenient location for the participant to allow for the collection of data. For two of the participants this meant that the interview was done at a location in person. For two of the other participants this meant that the interview was done over the phone. The interviews with all participants generally lasted around 30 to 45 minutes each. All interviews were voice recorded for later transcription. The interview consisted of ten questions, which were prepared by the researcher and reviewed and approved by the University of St. Thomas IRB prior to conducting the interview with the participant (see Appendix B). These ten open ended questions addressed different aspects of the McKinney-Vento legislative impact on homeless and highly mobile students. The questions covered funding, collaboration and communication, meeting the needs of students, and the recent economic crisis. These questions were formed following a review of the available literature on McKinney-Vento legislation. The questions were laid out in a manner that started at the beginning of the legislation and then evolved to include questions about meeting the needs

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of students, funding of the legislation and to bigger picture questions (see Appendix B).

Following the completion of the interview, the researcher transcribed the collected voice data.

Analysis Techniques

Grounded theory method and content analysis was used to examine the collected data and to determine codes and themes found throughout the information. Grounded theory method allows the researcher to use inductive reasoning to decipher categories in the information, therefore grounding them in the collected data (Berg, 2009). The process of using grounded theory to code data, which later leads to the evolution of themes, first includes looking through the information to find similarities and differences (Berg, 2009). While coding the information, the researcher also took theoretical notes called memoing. A theme was determined to exist after a code was determined to exist three or more times in the data. These themes consisted of at least three quotes from the participant.

Researcher Bias

The researcher's biases have also been identified. One bias is that the researcher has previously studied and written on this topic, which could influence the findings of this current study. In addition to this, the researcher has been an intern in a large urban school district, has worked with homeless and highly mobile students, and is familiar with that district's programming, which could influence findings. However, this district was not included in this research. This may have created bias in what I expected to find in the data that was collected. To thwart this bias, this researcher tried to code the data objectively without playing into held biases.

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Findings

Following the completion of interviews conducted with school district homeless and highly mobile liaisons, the collected data was analyzed. After reviewing and deciphering the collected data, many themes, as well as subthemes, emerged. Themes included the district liaison role, collaboration, economic climate, funding, unmet student needs, and needed changes to McKinney-Vento legislation. These themes along with the corresponding subthemes will be presented with supporting quotes from the collected data in the following paragraphs.

District Liaison Role

The first theme that was identified was the district liaison role with homeless and highly mobile students. While each school district is obligated to assign an individual to be the district homeless and highly mobile liaison for homeless students, it does not prescribe the specific role that the individual must have. Therefore, each district liaison has different priorities than other district liaisons for homeless and highly mobile students in different districts. Two distinct subthemes emerged from the data within this theme: administrative role and combined role.

Administrative role. The first subtheme that emerged within the theme of the district liaison role was an administrative role. This subtheme shows a more administrative role that district liaison can have. This more administrative role means that the district liaison has little to no direct contact with homeless and highly mobile students or families. Instead, their work consists of running and coordinating programming. The following quote from a respondent exemplifies this subtheme where the respondent's only role was to complete

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administrative duties while other staff members complete a direct service role with homeless and highly mobile students.

“So since we have such a large number of homeless kids, some districts have just one person in my capacity, or someone with multiple roles in my capacity, but I have a team of people. I don’t do the direct service, but I over see the program and make eligibility determinations when things are gray. But I have a team of people who are actually doing the direct service with families. I have 9 full time staff...”

Combined role. The second subtheme that emerged within the theme of the district liaison role was a combined role of both administrative duties and direct service duties, which included meeting with students and families, helping them register for school, and getting them needed school supplies, among other things. This subtheme describes how a homeless and high mobile district liaison can have a combined role comprised of both administrative duties and direct service duties. These respondents’ role was to complete administrative duties while also completing direct service tasks with homeless and highly mobile students and families. The following quotes from the respondents exemplify this subtheme.

One respondent said, *“I am one of four staff in the program, I oversee the program and so I am responsible that policy is followed, developing policy, community pieces that we want to develop and interact with. I also still do some direct service pieces so I initially meet, typically the family or unaccompanied youth who come through a shelter system or one of our transitional housing programs, or any individual, youth who we would qualify as homeless.”*

Another respondent said, *“So, but what I actually do is sometimes when people come into our district as homeless they know nothing about our community, they don’t have*

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transportation or phone so it is very hard for them to just do the basic things like registering. So sometimes I will help with registration, sometimes I will give rides to the schools and give tours of the schools with the families because they are unable to do that without transportation. We try to have people have the very best kind of first experience as they can coming into this school, because that is so important."

Collaboration

The second theme that was identified was collaboration that is used to help the homeless and highly mobile programing, in respective districts, succeed. Three distinct collaboration subthemes emerged from the data within this theme including internal collaboration, external collaboration, and lack of collaboration.

Internal collaboration. The first subtheme that emerged within the theme of collaboration was internal collaboration that happens within a school district. The main point of this subtheme is that there is internal collaboration that must happen within a school district for a homeless and highly mobile program to successfully serve it homeless and highly mobile students. This internal collaboration occurs between different departments including transportation, nutrition, social work, and enrollment, among others. The following quotes from the respondents exemplify this subtheme.

One respondent said, *"Our role is to make sure those kids are enrolled and that we are working through any transportation glitches and providing proper transportation so that kids can stay in attendance. And then working within each of the buildings and programming piece and assessment piece to make sure the kids are being successful throughout that school year as much as possible. So taking advantage of day time programming, after school programming, and making sure that the kids have those same opportunities."*

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Another respondent said, *“Internally as a district, we collaborate with transportation, we laugh when we go to present, because we feel like we are one in the same because so many issues for these kids revolve around transportation to school. Nutrition services we work really closely with to make sure kids have access to free meals. We have a system in place with them. We work with really close with our student placement center. So anytime a new family comes in to enroll in our district will fill out a homeless identification form. And then our schools also utilize that at the school level, so we capture families when they first come into register and we capture families if they are already attending our schools. So we have homeless contacts at each school. We work really closely with nursing and wellness department and immunizations. I get sent lists every month of kids who will be excluded from school, and homeless kids are exempt from that so I cross reference that.”*

Another respondent said, *“You know it helps to have a social worker in each building and a point person in each building because there are 21 schools in our district and I cannot get around to each of those schools every day. So one of the key things is that each building has their own homeless liaison person.”*

External collaboration. The second subtheme that emerged within the theme of collaboration was external collaboration that happens outside of the district itself. The main point of this subtheme is that there is external collaboration that must happen outside of a school district, but within the school districts greater community to successfully serve its homeless and highly mobile students. External collaboration occurs between different community organizations including shelters and various community homeless councils, among other organizations. The following quotes from the respondents describe this subtheme.

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One respondent said, *“You know it is really important that we collaborate with all of the community pieces and we learned that very early on... But we work very closely with all of the transitional housing programs and the shelter programs that we have in town, be they youth directed or family or individual. We attend a variety of meetings together through a county or city system. We interact in multiple ways, and that was developed, again our program has been around for so long, that it has been ingrained in how those systems interact.”*

Another respondent said, *“Externally, which is a lot of my role, [it] is [my role] to meet regularly with our continuum of care, to go to the mayor’s homeless advisory board meeting, [and] to collaborate with head start, ... it just goes on and on and on.”*

Another respondent said, *“And shelters, we don’t have shelters within our district, but shelters in Minneapolis, we have really good relationships with them so we keep in touch and they let us know if one of their students is ours and things like that.”*

Lack of collaboration. Much of the collected data suggested that internal and external collaboration was utilized to serve its homeless and highly mobile students. However, one respondent found that her district lacked in collaborating with other community organizations and groups. The main point of this subtheme is that while most districts utilize collaboration, both within and outside of their school district, some schools do not utilize collaboration to the fullest extent, in this case because of dwindling time and money.

“You know we need to be stronger in that area of collaboration. There are a lot of things going on that are positive, but we need more... that has been an ongoing concern of mine, that we don’t have enough collaboration and unfortunately, part of the reason is that

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everyone's funding is getting cut and with that your job responsibilities are being increased and nobody can take the time anymore..."

Economic Climate

The third theme that was identified was the economic climate that impacts homeless and highly mobile students and families. Two district subthemes emerged from this theme: increased poverty and increased numbers of homeless and highly mobile students.

Increased poverty. The first subtheme that emerged within the theme of economic climate was increased poverty among the homeless and highly mobile students. The main point of this subtheme is that the economic climate has impacted homeless and highly mobile students and families negatively by increasing the poverty that they live in. Increased poverty is shown by less available funding resources and less resources to meet daily needs like transportation. The following quotes from the respondents describe this subtheme.

One respondent said, *"It wasn't all of a sudden we are seeing all of these middle class families or working families losing their homes. There is some of that but it just isn't significant in the population we work with... but ... [the] economic crisis has impacted our families anyway because when the ERA funds came out, those were to serve families that were quick to get jobs, quick to back on their feet [and] find housing... Our families didn't qualify for that [funding] because they have unlawful detainers, they don't have a work history, they have multiple barriers so they didn't access those services. And so, and also there were so many people accessing those middle level service that our families that are below that are just getting less and less resources than they got before. Also our families are reaching their 5 year*

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limit on MFIP [Minnesota Family Investment Program], it is one thing to say, do you need housing assistance, and then there is no income. I mean you cannot find housing for families that don't have income."

Another respondent said, "Yes. I think what we are seeing now... is that more and more families are without vehicles. And before if they would be homeless and highly mobile at least they could still get around [because they had transportation] but now because of the economy and the price of gas there are just so many families without transportation and that is really effecting us here."

Increased numbers of homeless and highly mobile students. The second subtheme that emerged within the theme of economic climate was the increased numbers of homeless and highly mobile students. The main point of this subtheme is that because of the economic climate there are more homeless and highly mobile students. Respondents said that there has been an increase over the past few years. Increased numbers have been seen in the very young as well as in students who are doubling up with others. Increases in homeless and highly mobile students have also been seen as a result of families losing homes to foreclosure. The following quotes from respondents exemplify this subtheme.

One respondent said, "And you know our numbers are, and I think that you will hear this from other people, that over the last couple of years what we are seeing is that there is such an increase in the early childhood bracket, the 0-5 year olds."

Another respondent said, "But that is where we have really seen an increase, in the doubling up. And the number of unaccompanied youth that are in that same scenario... It started last year up here in the Duluth area and now it has really kind of snow balled. Already

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this year we have 35 students that we would say are doubled up where as last year, we had 20 some for the total year."

Another respondent said, *"I think that there has been definitely an increase with the economy and housing loss, I think that there is, but I also think that it has been steady for the last few years."*

Funding

The fourth theme that was identified was funding. Three distinct subthemes related to funding emerged from the collected data. These subthemes are insufficient funding, transportation costs, and funding uncertainty.

Insufficient funding. The first subtheme that emerged within the theme of funding was insufficient funding. The main point of this subtheme is that district liaisons feel that there is insufficient funding for their homeless and highly mobile programming. If districts were to solely rely on funding from the federal government they may not be able to have all of the programming that they wish to offer students. The following quotes from the respondents describe this subtheme.

One respondent stated, *"...our McKinney Vento funding competitive grant is \$100,000 so that is just a scratch on the surface. A very small amount...if we relied solely on the McKinney-Vento competitive grant...what we would end up probably doing is strictly enrollment and transportation and nutrition service."*

Another respondent said, *"So we received no funds from state or federal for Homeless, specifically through McKinney-Vento. And that was really hard. However it [homeless and highly mobile programming] has suffered quite a lot... I believe they used to get 75,000 a year from the state so when they had that money they were able to provide a school person over at*

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our local crisis shelter for youth, I believe that person was there all day or was there half a day and was in the school half a day. So we have actually lost a position over time."

Transportation costs. The second subtheme to emerge from the theme of funding was transportation costs. The main point of this subtheme is that transportation takes up a huge portion of the funding allotted to homeless and highly mobile programming. Because of the cost of transportation, at times it can cost too much to keep a child in their school of origin after a family has moved and for some districts most of their homeless and highly mobile students are not even residing in their district. The following quotes from the respondents describe this subtheme.

One respondent said, *"Getting back to funding, one of our biggest things with the number of families we see it is always the transportation piece, because when we have a family that fortunately permanently housed once they get their section 8 pay market rate for a place in town and get out of the shelter or out of doubling up situation, the district just doesn't have to money to continue to bus them back to that other school if they have moved out of that attendance area."*

Another respondent stated, *"While families are homeless or doubled up, [transportation is] not a problem, we provide that all the time, but once they are permanently housed it is just too hard. That is where having more money really comes down to those transportation pieces."*

Funding uncertainty. The third subtheme that emerged within the theme of funding was funding uncertainty for the homeless and highly mobile program. The main point of this subtheme is that district liaisons for homeless and highly mobile programming have uncertainty about whether or not their program will continue to be funded so that they will

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be able to continue to provide programming for homeless and highly mobile students. The following quotes from the respondents exemplify this subtheme.

One respondent said, "You know if there is a funding cut, because you never know, what is going to happen to our program, like we are all concerned, what is going to happen. And the funding across all districts is so tricky right now that, can my district kick in more money if I need it ...unfortunately there are so many cuts across districts and everyone wants their little share. It is really hard, but that is the way it is now."

Another respondent stated, "I am planning for if we don't get the funding, how are we going to do this [continue to provide programming] and how am I going to reach out to make sure we have another system or tweak in the community that is going to support our [homeless and highly mobile] programming in some way."

Unmet Student Needs

The fifth theme that was identified was the unmet needs of homeless and highly mobile students. Two distinct subthemes emerged from the collected data. These two subthemes are early childhood and older students.

Early childhood. The first subtheme that emerged within the theme of unmet student needs was early childhood. The main point of this subtheme is that there are unmet needs for students who would be considered in early childhood. Many times these young students do not generate the same funds, as do older students, therefore school districts are unable to provide some of the same services, such as transportation among other things. The following quotes from the respondents describe this subtheme.

"...early childhood has popped up in our district. We have a lot, we have 40-50 kids who are pre K who we didn't see last year."

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Older students. The second subtheme that was identified within the unmet student needs theme was older students. The main point of this theme is that there are unmet needs for students who may be older than typical students who are nearing graduation or are aging out of the school system. The following quotes from the respondents describe this subtheme.

One respondent said, *"I think that even though it has gotten much [easier] for homeless kids to apply for FAFSA and to get into higher education, I think that a lot of people don't know about that and I think that there are still some major gaps in getting our kids into college and it is partly due to their mobility."*

Another respondent stated, *"I think that they could do more for [homeless and highly mobile students], between the ages of 18 and 23 because they are not technically high school students anymore, yet many [of those homeless and highly mobile students] haven't graduated from high school yet. A lot of our kids are you know 20 credits behind and they will never be able to graduate and [then] they get to the age of 20, 22 23 and we can't have them [in school] under McKinney-Vento anymore. So I think that if there is some kind of programming or funding for 18-23 year olds that would help because we don't have that. The best we can do is say here is an ALC [alternative learning center] or an online learning class. But that won't get them to where they need to be [to graduate]."*

Needed changes to McKinney-Vento Legislation

The sixth theme that was identified was changes that are needed to improve the McKinney-Vento legislation. Three subthemes emerged from the data within this theme. These subthemes include funding, administrative changes and differentiating needs between rural and urban school districts.

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Funding. The first subtheme that emerged within the needed changes to McKinney-Vento legislation was funding. The main point of this subtheme is that homeless and highly mobile district liaisons desire changes to the funding for McKinney-Vento homeless and highly mobile programming. The following quotes from the respondents describe this subtheme.

One respondent said, *"We are always going to need this grant. It should just be general funding, I wish it would be just general funding. We can show the statistics that we have 400 kids that are homeless, let alone the other ones."*

Administrative changes. The second subtheme to emerge within the needed changes to McKinney-Vento legislation was administrative changes. The main point of this subtheme is that administrative changes need to be made to increase the capacity to serve homeless and highly mobile students. The following quotes from the respondents describe this subtheme.

One respondent said, *"Because for each child that I work with that means about 15 minutes to 20 minutes of sitting down at your computer to put it in. And that may not sound like a lot, but in a week's time I am registering 6 brand new students a week, which is pretty average, and may not seem like a lot, but if you can imagine each one of those students needs back packs, school supplies, they don't have immunization, they don't have transportation, they know nothing about [town name] parents know nothing about [town name] you know what I mean. I mean it is exhausting in itself to work with the families and it would be nothing for me to work until 6:00pm every night, just meeting the needs of the families, and then there is all that reporting that needs to be done on top of that."*

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Differentiating needs between rural and urban districts. The third subtheme to emerge within the needed changes to McKinney-Vento legislation was differentiating needs between rural and urban districts. The main point of this subtheme is there are different needs for homeless and highly mobile programs in rural settings as compared to more urban settings. Additionally, different duties fall on the liaisons that are working with homeless and highly mobile students depending on whether they are serving students in rural or urban districts. The following quotes from the respondents describe this subtheme.

One respondent stated, "And it shows the difference between rural and urban districts. Larger districts can have staffs to do paper work and people dedicated to doing direct work with the families. And in rural places all of that falls on one person. And in the metro, your school district, I don't know their size, but let's say it serves 40 miles, well ours is 90 miles and we might have to drive an extra 2 miles to pick up just one kids, and they don't look at that."

Another respondent said, "Out in the rural region, when you are dealing with homeless kids and there is no shelter. It is pretty easy for us, not that we don't id kids who are doubled up and living in cars, but if that was your main focus, you know I can set up a system and have my staff check in with shelters every day, but how do you check in every single day to a hotel or to doubled up situations? You can do it, but there are just more hoops to go through."

Discussion

After reviewing themes that emerged from the collected data, similarities and differences surfaced between the data collected from respondents and from the literature. The first theme that emerged from the data was the district liaison role, including the subthemes of administrative role and combined role. The respondents outlined two distinct roles that they have in the district liaison role: administrator and a combined role

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(administrator and direct service). While the literature acknowledges the establishment of the district liaison (Markward & Biros, 2001), it does not further discuss the role of the district liaison in the school district or the interaction with homeless and highly mobile students and families. Respondents described two different roles. One role was purely administrative with no direct service contact with students or families. The other role that respondents described was a combined role of both administrative duties and also many direct service duties.

The second theme that emerged from the data was collaboration, including the subthemes of internal collaboration, external collaboration and lack of collaboration. The respondents defined three distinct types of collaboration. The first type of collaboration was internal collaboration whereby districts collaborate with different departments within the school district. These commonly include food service, transportation, and nursing among others. The literature discusses these other departments, such as transportation, within districts as barriers to education (Masten, Sesma, Si-Asar, Lawrence, Miliotis, & Dionne, 1997; Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006). However, respondents found that partnerships were built with these departments within their school districts, which facilitated internal collaboration and increased and improved services available to homeless and highly mobile students. Therefore building these internal collaborative partnerships reduced barriers to education for homeless and highly mobile students.

The second type of collaboration was external collaboration whereby districts collaborate with groups outside of their school setting. These outside groups included shelters as well as many community groups and boards with a focus on homelessness and poverty. While the literature does mention collaboration as necessary for homeless and

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highly mobile programming to succeed (Reed-Victor & Stronge, 2002; Miller, 2009), it does not differentiate between the types of collaboration happening. Whereas most respondents thought favorably in terms of collaboration, one respondent pointedly stated the importance of improving collaboration both internally and externally within the respective district.

The third theme that emerged from the data was economic climate, including the subthemes of increased poverty and increased numbers of homeless and highly mobile students. The first subtheme, increased poverty, reflected respondents' witnessing increased difficulties within the homeless and highly mobile student population as a result of the economic crisis. The literature does not discuss the economic climate, but it does mention the poverty in which homeless and highly mobile children and families live (Miller, 2009). For respondents, increased poverty in homeless and highly mobile students appeared in an inability to access transportation and in there being less government funding for housing and other programs not related to McKinney-Vento legislation.

Additionally, the second subtheme that emerged from the data was the increased numbers of homeless and highly mobile students. Respondents drew a connection between the economic crisis and increased numbers of homeless and highly mobile students in their district programs. The economic crisis was not specifically cited in the literature, but it has been found that the numbers of homeless children have been increasing (Reed-Victor & Stronge, 2002).

The fourth theme that emerged from the data was funding, including the subthemes of insufficient funding, funding uncertainty, and transportation costs. The first subtheme, insufficient funding, reflected respondent's responses in regards to funding that they

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receive for homeless and highly mobile programming. Every respondent mentioned that more funding could be used to improve the services and programming they are able to provide to homeless and highly mobile students. The literature also commonly cited inadequate funding for homeless and highly mobile programming (Nord and Luloff, 1995; Biggar, 2001; Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). However, while the literature mentioned districts encountered issues receiving allotted funding from the state, respondents did not share this problem.

The second subtheme, funding uncertainty, again reflected respondents' responses in regard to funding that they received for homeless and highly mobile programming. While respondents stated that problems are not encountered in receiving the funding from the Department of Education after it has been awarded through a competitive state process, there is great uncertainty for many districts as to if they will be awarded funds from the competitive process for districts in the state. This is because even if a district can demonstrate that it has a significant homeless and highly mobile student population, it does not guarantee the district funding for homeless and highly mobile programming. For some respondents, this uncertainty creates stress on individual district liaisons and on the program and services it is able to provide to its homeless and highly mobile students. The literature states that districts have encountered issues receiving funding it was awarded from the state, however respondents did not share this problem. If the school district they had served was awarded funding in the competitive grant process it was paid to the district in a timely manner (Nord and Luloff, 1995; Biggar, 2001; Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006).

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The third subtheme, transportation costs, reflected respondents' responses in regard to funding for homeless and highly mobile programming, specifically transportation. Respondents commonly mentioned the huge cost of transporting homeless and highly mobile students so that they can stay in their school of origin. Whether it was having to travel outside of the district to pick up and drop off homeless and highly mobile students, or if it is the general size of the school district, transportation takes up a huge portion of the homeless and highly mobile programming budget. The literature mentions transportation, but in a way that is a barrier to getting kids to school (Masten, 1997), whereas respondents' barrier with transportation was not getting the children, but the cost of doing so.

The fifth theme that emerged from the data was unmet student needs, including the subthemes of early childhood and older students. The first subtheme, early childhood, reflects respondents' responses in regard to unmet student needs. Respondents said that young students who are homeless and highly mobile, student's who would typically be in head start programs, have needs that are not met. Many times this is dependent on the program and whether or not it is associated with the school district. Many times, head start students do not generate the same funds as older students; therefore it is very difficult to provide the same programming to them. Specifically, transportation costs would be extremely high and difficult to fund without the same fund generation as other older students. The literature does mention this population of students as the number of homeless children under the age of five has steadily increased (Reed-Victor & Stronge, 2002).

The second subtheme, older students, again reflects respondents' responses in regard to homeless and highly mobile students who have unmet needs. Respondents stated

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that older students, students who are nearing the end of school, have needs that are not met. For example, these students may not have adequate credits to graduate or may age out of the school system. The literature does discuss truancy, academic and behavioral difficulty, and repeating grades (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; Miller, 2009), but it does not specifically discuss the needs of older homeless and highly mobile students.

The last theme that emerged from the data was needed changes to the McKinney-Vento legislation including the subthemes of funding, administrative changes, and differentiating urban and rural school districts. The first subtheme, funding, reflects respondents' responses in regard to needed changes to McKinney-Vento legislation. The literature does mention that an increase in funding is a needed change in McKinney-Vento legislation (Nord & Luloff, 1995). This sentiment was echoed in the data collected from the respondents. However, the respondents also detailed more specifics, included making funding for programming part of general funding, meaning that it would not be a competitive process to access funds, and to generally increase the amount of funding available for homeless and highly mobile programming.

While funding is commonly critiqued when McKinney-Vento legislation is being reviewed, in this research different funding topics were raised by district liaisons. Specifically, most respondents discussed an uncertainty of continually retaining funding for homeless and highly mobile programming from the state. It is designated in the federal McKinney-Vento legislation that the federal government gives funds to be dispersed by the state for homeless and highly mobile programming. It is then up to each state to decide how that funding is dispersed to the districts in the state. In Minnesota, school districts

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compete in two-year cycles to receive funding from McKinney-Vento. While there may be upsides to making this a competitive process, there are also many downsides. For example, even though districts have a significant portion of homeless and highly mobile students that does not mean that the district will receive funding for homeless and highly mobile funding. Additionally, districts that have received funding before, are not guaranteed to receive it every year. Therefore, many districts try their best to comply with all of the terms, but may not meet them all. This creates a parallel process where homeless and highly mobile programs have to deal with some of the same uncertainty that the families who are homeless and highly mobile have to deal with everyday. Equitable funding for all school districts must be ensured because students who are homeless and highly mobile deserve the very best programming to enable them to succeed in school.

The second subtheme, administrative changes, again reflects respondents' responses regarding needed changes to the McKinney-Vento legislation. Specifically, respondents reported the need to streamline necessary reporting on homeless and highly mobile students. The literature does discuss the need to develop better tracking methods of homeless students (Nord & Luloff, 1995), but it does not specifically mention streamlining the necessary reporting for homeless and highly mobile programming.

The third subtheme, differentiating urban and rural school districts, reflects respondents' responses regarding needed changes to McKinney-Vento legislation. Respondents, from both urban and rural districts, discussed the complexity of programming that exists in all districts. However respondents also said that programming is very different from rural to urban districts. These differences include available staff to do administrative duties and work with homeless and highly mobile students and families,

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land size of the school district, and transportation systems among other things. The literature does not specifically mention the differences between urban and rural districts and how that should be addressed in the future.

Conclusion

Much research has been done on homeless and highly mobile students, and many important issues have been brought to the forefront. Besides the understanding that homelessness is a very present and persistent issue regarding children, and one that still needs attention, many findings from this research has been echoed throughout past research. These findings include the importance of collaboration, whether that is within a school district or in agencies outside of the school district, and that students who are homeless or highly mobile many times have needs that are unmet, which range from academic needs to medical and transportation needs, among other things. However, in this research, the most prominent findings included differentiating needs between urban and rural districts in McKinney-Vento legislation in regards to equitable funding.

Throughout all of the interviews conducted with homeless and highly mobile liaisons from varying districts, urban, suburban and rural, it was clear that each district has distinct struggles. For rural districts it can be the land size of the district and the lack of public transportation or taxi service cost that is a barrier to mobilizing homeless students. There is also a great difference with the size of staff dedicated to working with homeless students and families in rural districts as compared to suburban or urban districts, even though they may be serving the same, if not more homeless and highly mobile students. In one suburban district that was included in this research, homeless programming was relatively new, and educating the district about the needs of students was necessary.

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Additionally, the distance between shelters and the suburban district was very large, which increases the cost of transportation. In urban districts, the sheer number of homeless students that are served each day, and the complexity of getting transportation to them every day, while crossing county lines is different than that of smaller districts. Obviously, each district has different struggles, however, this is not identified in McKinney-Vento legislation. Instead distinctions are not made between districts. If legislation is to be improved in the future, it is necessary to address the differing needs of different of rural, suburban and urban school districts.

Future social work research should continue to address issues facing homeless and highly mobile students as well as the ability of school districts to carry out mandates set for students facing homelessness. Beyond the previously stated points, research should address homeless and highly mobile programming throughout similar sized school districts in the United States. Conducting this research could allow the development of best practices in the field. Future research should also continue to address what the most effective legislation would look like to meet the needs faced by students who are homeless and highly mobile, and the needs of the programs in each that are there to help students meet their potential.

To improve programming for homeless and highly mobile students, McKinney-Vento legislation needs to differentiate between the needs of rural, suburban and urban school districts and increase funding for programming and demand equitable funding across school districts. Rural, suburban and urban school districts all have their own needs, and while some of their characteristics are similar to others, many are unique to them. This

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needs to be addressed and districts need to have appropriate access to funding and supports that would help to minimize their unique needs.

Also, school districts and liaisons to homeless and highly mobile students know what is best needed for the homeless and highly mobile students in their individual district. Most are utilizing collaboration within and outside of the school district to provide the best programming to homeless and highly mobile students that they are able to. However with more resources, specifically with equitable funding, districts will be better able to provide more complete programming for homeless and highly mobile students thereby increasing accessibility to education and hopefully increasing the likelihood of these students ability to succeed.

Future social work practice regarding McKinney-Veto programming for homeless and highly mobile students should continue to assess the needs of these students as outside forces, such as the economic climate, continue to change. Additionally, future social work practice needs to confront the contributing factors of homelessness, specifically poverty. By taking on the causes of poverty, and working to diminish those causes, hopefully, homelessness among students will also be reduced.

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HOMELESS AND HIGHLY MOBILE

Appendix A Consent Form

CONSENT FORM UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS GRSW682 RESEARCH PROJECT

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Is it working for Homeless and Highly Mobile Students?

I am conducting a study about programs developed to help homeless and highly mobile students. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are the directly involved with homeless and highly mobile students in your school district. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Megan Betters, a graduate student at the School of Social Work, St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas and supervised by Dr. Kendra Garrett.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to analyze if McKinney-Vento legislation is meeting the needs of students who are homeless or highly mobile.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: participate in a 30-45 minute interview about the homeless and highly mobile program to assist students within your school district and surrounding issues. Megan Betters will conduct this interview, either in person, or over the internet, and it will be audio recorded. The data collected from the interview will be used in a presentation and paper for a graduate research project.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has no direct risks and no direct benefits.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. As a classroom protocol, I will not publish any of this material. Research records will be kept in a locked file in my residence. I will also keep the electronic copy of the transcript in a password-protected file on my computer. My research professor may see the interview transcript, but will not know who you are, as I will delete any identifying information from the transcript. Findings from the transcript will be presented in May. The audiotape and transcript will be destroyed by June 1, 2012.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer and may stop the interview at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Catherine University, the University of St. Thomas, or the School of Social Work. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you will not be used.

Contacts and Questions

HOMELESS AND HIGHLY MOBILE

My name is Megan Betters. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at. Professor Kendra Garrett can be reached at. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study and to be audiotaped.

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Print Name of Study Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date

HOMELESS AND HIGHLY MOBILE

Appendix B Interview Questions

Can you please describe your school district (urban, suburban, rural), and approximately how many homeless and highly mobile (HHM) students are served in your district?

What is your role with HHM students? How long have you done this work?

Are there key collaborations that help meet the needs of HHM students in your district?

Reports have stated that the recent economic and mortgage crisis has increased the numbers of students who are homeless or highly mobile in states across the country. Has this been the same experience in your district? If not increased numbers, have you seen other affects of the recent financial crisis in the students that are already HHM?

Have you encountered any issues in receiving funding from state or federal entities for HHM programming? Are monies provided by the state and federal government enough to cover the programs that your district provides to HHM students?

Was the McKinney-Vento legislation a guide to making the HHM program for your district? How so? Were there other frameworks that were used to make it?

Does the McKinney-Vento Legislation meet the needs for students at all levels of schooling? (preschool, elementary, high school) Are there any needs not being met? (Pause) Prompt – What about issues with transportation or enrollment?

Are there changes that should be made to the McKinney-Vento legislation? If so, what?

Is there anything else important for that I should know about HHM programming in your district? Anything else you would like to mention?

HOMELESS AND HIGHLY MOBILE

Appendix C

Email and Phone Script

Hello (Name),

I am contacting you today because of your work with homeless and highly mobile students in your school district. My name is Megan Betters, and I am a MSW graduate student at the University of St. Thomas and St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN. My graduate research project concerns programming for homeless and highly mobile students established by McKinney-Vento Legislation.

This qualitative study will consist of nine questions that should be a 30-45 minute interview, conducted at your convenience (on the phone or over the internet). The interview will be recorded for later transcription.

Please let me know if you have any questions, or if you are willing to participate in this interview.

Sincerely,

Megan Betters